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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ABUJA 001951

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/02/2018

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MITEE DISCUSSES NIGER DELTA TECHNICAL
COMMITTEE'S OUTREACH, MILITARY ISSUES, AND ASSISTANCE NEEDS

Classified By: A/DCM Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (C) During their three hour September 30 meeting (other subjects covered in septel) the Ambassador (accompanied by Poloff, notetaker) and Ledum Mitee, Chairman of the new Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC), discussed the committee's outreach. Mitee reported that the NDTC has received over 2,000 inputs from the general public and has engaged with array of militants, including "General Boyloaf", Farah Dagogo, and Ateke Tom. Mitee opined that efforts should be made to bring in those militants who can be brought (especially the lower level "foot soldiers", and include them in a disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation process. He noted that there needs to be a distinction between "marginal militants" who can be reintegrated into society, and "hardened criminals" who will have to be held accountable for their actions. Mitee told the Ambassador that the committee is seeking assistance from experts in civil society; advice on best practices for disarmament; and technical assistance. He asked for USG help in getting access to the Presidency. The Ambassador offered to call the new Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) in this regard. She also told Mitee of the US-UK joint paper in support of the NDTC, and said we might also be able to provide assistance through our development partners. (For other subjects -- including the committee's mandate, structure, timeline and its challenges in working with the Vice President's office -- see septel.) End Summary.

Outreach

12. (C) The new Chairman of the Niger Delta Technical Committee (NDTC), Ledum Mitee, began his discussion by noting that conflict in the Niger Delta is a national problem so the committee is reaching out to the public. He specifically noted that the committee has contacted the Emir of Kano and the Sultan of Sokoto, and that it has received over 2,000 responses from the general public. He has also spoken with militant leaders "General Boyloaf" (AKA Victor Ebikabowei), Farah Dagogo, and Ateke Tom, but not yet from Commander Mac'Iver. Mitee said that, in his first conversation with Boyloaf by phone, the latter (who sounded drunk to Mitee) asked him, "Why do you think you'll succeed?" Mitee told Boyloaf that he needs peace more than Mitee does, and that peace was the only route to amnesty for him. Boyloaf hung up on him, but called Mitee back several days later, sounding more sober, and added that he would to see what to committee would produce. Mitee told Boyloaf that he would not meet him face to face unless there was a cease-fire that was part of a DDR process.

13. (C) Mitee said he has for many years engaged former Head of State, retired General Abdulsalami Abubakar (who brought Nigeria back to democracy in 1999 after the death of dictator Sani Abacha) on national issues since Mitee's time in prison and has since sought him out on the Niger Delta Technical Committee and what should be done. Mitee discussed with Abubakar the need to create a single core policy that applies to Rivers, Delta, and Bayelsa States. Mitee trusts Abubakar and feels he can discuss issues openly with him. Mitee agreed with the Ambassador that, unless changes are coordinated throughout the three core Delta states, the militants will continue to move from state to state depending on where the military pressure is at the time.

DDR Questions

14. (C) On the question of disarmament, demobilization and rehabilitation (DDR) Mitee said that the goal should be to bring in those militants that you can and include them in the DDR process. He is looking at Northern Ireland as an example for office structure and coordination of DDR. He told the Ambassador that people in the Delta region are tired of shooting; they want amnesty and rehabilitation. He said that the committee will allow representatives of the militants to submit their views to the NDTC.

15. (C) The Ambassador asked Mitee if the committee will address the question of making a distinction between militants and criminals. Mitee said there are clearly some who are "marginal militants" who can be reintegrated into society, for example those who kidnap for school fees, etc. On the other hand, he said there were also some "hardened criminals" who will have to be held responsible for their crimes. At some point the government needs to move and enforce the law, he said. He believes people will speak out and identify criminals if they know that action will be taken against them. On the other hand, if people know there is impunity for crime, then crime becomes a culture. The Ambassador asked if the NDTC was considering something like a truth and reconciliation program for the militants to which Mitee said there were a number of international practices he wanted the NDTC to review.

Assistance

16. (C) Because of his concerns regarding the disconnect between the Vice President's Office and the President's Office (see septel) Mitee asked for assistance from the USG in getting access to the Presidency. In response, the Ambassador offered to call the new Secretary to the Government of the Federation (SGF) noting some of the challenges he raised. She also noted that Mitee needed to find an ally in the Villa but outside of the Vice President's office who is powerful, has authority, and has the ear of the President, such as the SGF, Mahmud Yaye Ahmed. She offered to contact Ahmed and facilitate such contact. The Ambassador also said in her next meeting with President Yar'Adua she will raise the issue.

17. (C) Mitee also asked about whom the committee might contact for advice on best practices for disarmament. The Ambassador suggested he contact the International Organization for Migration (IOM) in Geneva. She suggested that Mitee get information from IOM's website, and offered to contact the DRL Bureau in the State Department to inquire if it has any materials on DDR.

18. (C) Mitee said the committee would also need help from people in civil society who know the issues and can act as resource persons. He said he has already made arrangements with Diamond Bank to borrow an accountant and research staff. When the Ambassador asked him if Nigerian universities (particularly in the Delta) could assist the committee, such as by giving it a neutral workspace, Mitee said he had proposed such an idea, but half of the committee members and the Vice President did not agree. The Ambassador suggested UNDP or the World Bank may be able to help in this regard. Mitee said he was also hoping for some technical assistance from the UNDP, but that the UNDP is frustrated with the results of previous funding. He said the committee has also contacted the World Bank ResRep, but has not yet met with him.

19. (C) The Ambassador told Mitee that, while the committee may not want an outside government to provide technical assistance, the USG has already offered to help in various ways if requested. She told him of the US-UK joint paper in support of the committee. Mitee said the paper and assistance would be welcomed, and that he does not understand why the government would not "jump at" such offers.

110. (C) Mitee recently met with officers from the UK High Commission who have offered to help get civil society groups involved - since the Vice President's office is not providing resources. Mitee said the committee has identified five or six resources people, but needs funds to pay and house them; the UK has offered to help in this area. The Ambassador told Mitee that we might also be able to help with this, if the organizations were among our development partners.

111. (U) This cable is coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
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